

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL VANCOUVER

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3102

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

UNCLAS VANCOUVER 1123

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY CONVENTION: A NEW "POPULIST" IMAGE

1. THE B.C. SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY HELD ITS FIRST ANNUAL CONVENTION SINCE LAST YEAR'S ELECTION VICTORY ON OCTOBER 21-24. PREMIER BENNETT AND PARTY PRESIDENT HYNDMAN SEEMED TO HAVE MANAGED THE CONVENTION VERY SKILLFULLY. THIS WAS MOST EVIDENT IN THE DEFEAT OF A RIGHT-TO-WORK RESOLUTION AND AN ASSOCIATED RESOLUTION CALLING FOR A REDUCTION IN THE MINIMUM WAGE. THEIR ADOPTION, WHILE NOT BINDING ON THE GOVERNMENT, WOULD HAVE BEEN PERCEIVED AS AN OPEN DECLARATION OF WAR ON LABOR, AND WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE LED TO SERIOUS CONFRONTATION IN THIS HIGHLY UNIONIZED PROVINCE.

2. THE RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS OF THE PARTY WERE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO BLOW OFF STEAM BY PASSING RESOLUTIONS IN LESS DANGEROUS AREAS, SUCH AS THE RETURN OF THE STRAP TO SCHOOLS AND OPPOSITION TO GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION. APPARENTLY THE RIGHT-WING ELEMENTS OF THE PARTY WERE UNWILLING TO ROCK THE BOAT NOW THAT THE SOCREDS HAVE RETURNED TO POWER.

3. HYNDMAN TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE CONVENTION SHOWS THAT THE PARTY IS ABANDONING ITS RIGHT-WING IMAGE IN FAVOR OF A "POPULIST" ONE.

BENNETT AGREED WITH THE DESCRIPTION, BUT SUGGESTED THAT IT

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HAD ALWAYS APPLIED.

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